

WORLDVIEW INTRODUCTION (1): Why do we need the Christian worldview?

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The battle of worldviews matters for two clear, connected reasons:

(1) A false worldview becomes a barrier to an acceptance of God's saving grace.

(2) Encapsulated in the doctrine of common grace, God has compassion for the saved and unsaved.

Unpacking point (2) in the context of public life, the failure to contend for the Christian worldview in politics has had three particular implications:

(a) Defeat after defeat on individual issues of importance to Christians;

(b) The persistence of a range of social problems in a world dominated by materialist worldviews.

(c) Increasing disillusionment with politics as counterfeit worldviews fail to meet the challenges facing society.

The rest of this first introductory essay examines the above five points in turn.

(1) A false worldview becomes a barrier to an acceptance of God's saving grace.

The advance of the gospel is hindered if *"we permit the whole collective thought of a nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion"* (J Gresham Machen). The scientific assault on the biblical idea that we are created in the image of God - and have not randomly evolved from 'the slime' - is, perhaps, paramount. J Gresham Machen went on to describe the purpose of apologetics as to *"mould the thought of the world in such a way as to make the acceptance of Christianity something more than a logical absurdity."* Our first task, therefore, is not necessarily to convince people of the truth of the Christian message but of its plausibility.

(2) Encapsulated in the doctrine of common grace, God has compassion for the saved and unsaved.

Insofar as counterfeit worldviews prosper - and in proportion to how much they contradict the Christian worldview - the people who live under them, and by them, will be hurt and truth will be concealed from them. God is concerned for all people whether saved or not. Our sin deserves immediate punishment but God has held back much of the deserved consequences of the Fall and granted humanity what is called 'common grace' [see Wayne Grudem's full definition by clicking on the 'related link' at the bottom of this page]. The world is broken but it is not, through God's grace, unblessed by some of the beauty and promise of the Created ideal. Followers of Christ are responsible for promoting His common grace and in that respect we need to uphold the institutions of marriage and government, to increase understanding of Creation, to create inspirational works of art and beauty and to serve and heal those people suffering from the results of the Fall.

As the Christian Fellowship of one of Britain's two main political parties the CCF is particularly interested in how we 'promote God's common grace' in public life:

The failure of Christians engaged in public life to contend for a biblical worldview

has had three related consequences:

(a) Defeat after defeat on individual issues of importance to Christians;

(b) The persistence of a range of social problems in a world dominated by materialist worldviews.

(c) Increasing disillusionment with politics as counterfeit worldviews fail to meet the challenges facing society.

Each of these three issues are examined briefly below.

(a) Defeat after defeat on individual issues of importance to Christians.

In the last fifty years Christian campaigners have been defeated on a wide range of issues from the specialness of Sunday as a day of rest to the sanctity of the unborn and the status of marriage at the heart of a civilised society. These defeats are, in large part due to Christians' collective failure to understand immediate battles over such individual issues as third world debt relief, cloning, and poverty in their wider context.

Responding to issues one by one can lead us to contribute unwittingly to the cultural acceptance of ways of thinking that are hostile to the Christian worldview as a whole.

For example, defending the foetus from the abortionist's needle by talking about the moral autonomy and independence of the individual unborn child may win some converts on this single issue but help to fashion a cultural belief in the absolute sovereignty of the individual. This belief might later be used to accelerate moves towards the legalisation of euthanasia and acceptance of an individual's right-to-die. It can even feed Social Darwinism where only the fittest and strongest are deemed worthy of survival. A defence of the unborn based in the Christian worldview (and our engagement with other issues) must, instead, be based on a broad and biblical understanding of what it means to be human. Life needs to be understood in relational terms - as a series of overlapping responsibilities to family, community and ultimately, of course, God. We need to know why worldviews that rely, for example, on the sovereignty of the individual or science as unchallengeable, are false. The next essay in this three-part series (see 'related link' below) examines the five fundamental characteristics of a Christian worldview.

(b) The persistence of a range of social problems in a world dominated by materialist worldviews.

Britain and most western societies have become so much richer in recent times and have spent record sums through the welfare state. But certain social problems - family breakdown, drug addiction, loneliness, and escapism, for example - have actually worsened despite accelerating material and scientific advances. Why? Worldviews built around materialism and science are not only not helping address these social challenges - they can be harmful. The market and the state can be destructive of the relationships between people that give life meaning and that ensure transfer between people of the wisdom upon which civilization depends.

(c) Increasing disillusionment with politics as counterfeit worldviews fail to meet the challenges facing society.

Cynicism towards politics and the collapse in turnouts at elections are worrying politicians throughout much of the developed world. Much of the cynicism and disillusionment is rooted in the failure of the tired and failed ideologies of socialism, consumerism and scientism to answer societies' great remaining challenges.
